

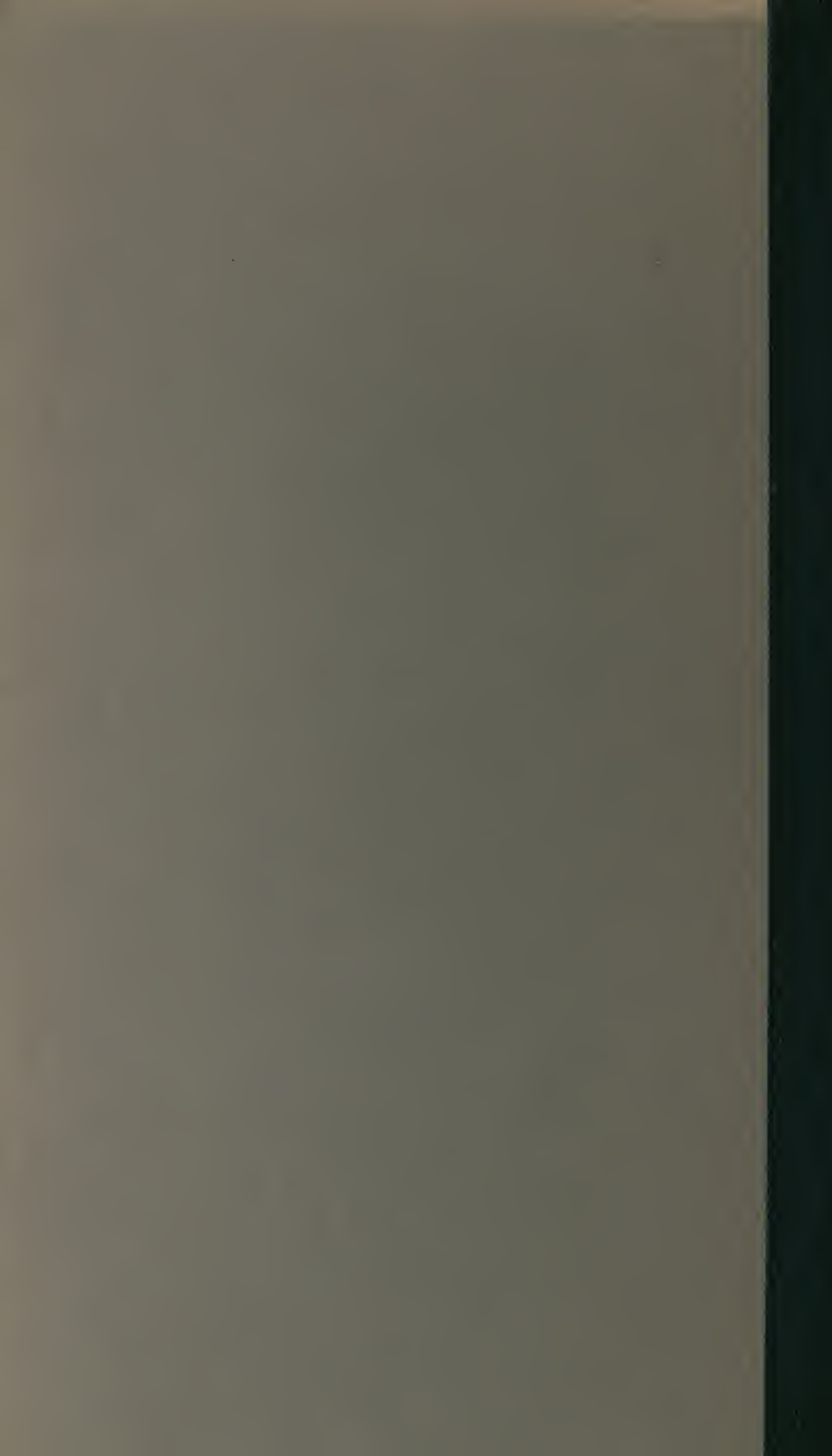


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A letter on the  
Corn laws, to the  
Manchester Chamber  
of Commerce

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A  
LETTER  
ON THE  
CORN LAWS,

TO THE  
MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

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BY W. WOLRYCHE WHITMORE, Esq.

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LONDON:  
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A

## LETTER

TO THE

MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

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GENTLEMEN,

AS an early and constant opponent of the existing Corn Laws, I venture to address you. I rejoice to find that you, and the very important interests you represent, have taken so very decided a lead in the consideration of this subject. Satisfied as well of the extreme impolicy of the present system, as that its evils are glaring, and its results obviously dangerous to the permanent prosperity of the country, I feel that it only requires a steady perseverance on the part of the manufacturing and commercial interests, to force the subject on the consideration of the administration and the legislature, and, finally, to ensure such an alteration, as shall pave the way for the establishment of entire freedom of trade in the important article of Corn. It may, at the present time of day, appear superfluous to enter much at length into the impolicy of the existing law. To you, especially, who have expressed so decided an opinion upon the subject, there can be no need to

dwell upon it. But you have a hard battle to fight; and although I consider success, in the end, undoubted, if your cause be well conducted and steadily followed up, still, you ought not to neglect any means whereby your opponents can be won over, or the legislature convinced. New arguments on this long debated subject are not to be expected; but the deliberate record of the opinion of those who cannot be suspected of having their judgment biassed by pecuniary interests, and whose mind has long been turned to the subject, may not be without its use. For myself, I can with truth say, that time, reflection, and that cooler and calmer judgment, which retirement from the active scenes of public life produces, have only tended, still more strongly to impress my mind with a conviction of the extreme impolicy of the existing corn law, whether considered with reference to its immediate effect on the well being of the mass of the people, or to its ultimate result on the prosperity of the country. With regard to the first point, I shall merely say, that a law restricting the people of this country from purchasing their food in the cheapest market, and establishing a monopoly whereby the affluent are made more rich, and the needy more poor, is one dangerous at all times, but in the present state of the country, fraught with imminent peril to the peace of the community—the security of property—and the harmony and concord which is necessary to bind society together. But it is mainly to the ultimate result that I look with the greatest anxiety. In looking at the small comparative extent of Great Britain, and considering her wealth, her power, and the extent of her foreign possessions, it is impossible not to be convinced, that these great results have been obtained, and can alone be preserved, by her great commercial and manufacturing superiority. It is equally obvious, that the dense population, and large consumption of the necessaries of life, consequent



upon this extent of commerce and manufactures, must conduce to the advantage of the proprietors of land. In no part of the world is land of the same quality so valuable as in Great Britain; no where has it been so generally improved; and no where, are the prospects of still more extended improvement, and the elements of increased value, more clearly apparent. All this arises from the immense capital already expended, and the additional capital which, unless checked by short-sighted policy, would every year be expended, in commercial and manufacturing pursuits. It is unnecessary to do more than advert to this truth, which is obvious to the commonest observation; but if so, what are we to think of a policy, which throws all the impediments possible in the way of a progress so beneficial to all parties, and upon the plea of protecting and encouraging an interest, which, it can easily be shown, is more than any other, interested in the general increase in the wealth of the country? Such, I scruple not to say, is the case of the agricultural interest. The proprietor of soil in this country, has a more permanent interest in the country, than any other class; he has not only what is commonly called a stake in the hedge, but he has one which has roots and leaves; which, properly tended and allowed full room, is destined to become a tree, under the shadow of whose branches, he and his posterity may rely on finding ample and increasing shelter; in other words, land, in a manufacturing country, is (slowly perhaps in some cases, but still certainly and constantly,) increasing in value. Ask any one who has investigated the subject, what was the value of any given estate fifty years ago, and what it is now? I will venture to assert, that however stubborn the soil, and however remotely situated, there is scarcely any but will be found to have increased to a considerable extent; and that the better the land, and the more favourably situated in point of

markets, the rise in value will have been proportionably greater. I allude not to land in the immediate vicinity of large towns, or already built upon; there, the increase is prodigious; but I speak of districts purely agricultural, and I affirm, without fear of contradiction, that great increase in value is everywhere, in England, perceptible: and I assert with equal confidence, that this has in no wise arisen from the protection, as it is almost in mockery called, of corn laws. Nay, further, that this protection, by raising hopes never likely to be realized, and by placing the agricultural interest in a constant state either of feverish excitement, or gloomy despondency, has arrested the steady progress which would otherwise have gone on. The fact is the increase in value took place under circumstances wherein no protection by law was really afforded.

It would lead me too far to enter at large upon this part of the subject; I speak, however, not at random, and have, on former occasions, entered fully upon it. The Corn Law which had its origin in 1815, and which, although modified by subsequent enactments, is still virtually in existence, is that to which I allude; the laws existing previously, never did operate to the exclusion of foreign corn, and had, as may easily be shown, little or no effect upon its price in the English markets. This exclusion is a monstrous principle; it tends to derange the whole commerce of Europe, I may almost say, of the world; and while it conveys no real benefit to the English farmer, it places the most serious impediment in the way of the English merchant and manufacturer. It impedes our foreign commerce, throwing it out of its natural and most beneficial channels, lessening in some cases, and destroying in others, the intercourse between Great Britain and countries which would otherwise be our best customers; it fosters, and gives as it were a premium upon, foreign manufactures, calling them into premature existence, to the detriment



of our own trade ; if protective of any thing, it is protective of the manufactures of Germany and of America ; to us, its effects are wholly destructive. It tends in some degree to raise the price of food here, tho' I think I can shew that even here, its effects are much over rated ; but it tends in a very material degree to lower its price in other countries, thereby offering an inducement, even to the English capitalist, to invest his property, and transfer his skill to any other country rather than Great Britain. It deranges our currency by its uncertain and fitful effects, creating at times a large and most inconvenient drain upon the bullion market of England ; while, to crown all, it menaces and must, in the long-run, end in producing the most fearful effects, in diminishing the supply of food to the people of this country. It drives them to seek their supplies from comparatively narrow limits ; from a soil either of the worst description, or one, whose productive powers are much diminished by over-cropping, and from situations, where the climate renders the ripening and harvesting of grain crops, precarious and uncertain. That we should have gone on for upwards of twenty years without experiencing these effects in their most fearful form—that of famine, is the boast and chuckle of the friends of the law ; they assume to themselves the praise of practical wisdom, and point to this, as one of its proofs. Now, true it is, that hitherto, altho' often inconvenienced by the short supply of food, we have not, as yet, felt the tremendous effects which must, sooner or later, arise from this miserable tampering with the natural course of trade ; but this arises, not from their foresight or the wisdom of their law, but from the fact, that altho' there have been occasionally short crops, there has never been a really deficient season, or a very bad harvest, since 1816, and that occurred just after the passing of the law, when it had had no time to produce its effects, and when we pos-

essed an immense stock of grain of previous years growth. Had one such season occurred later, and still more, had, as sometimes happens, two such occurred in succession, there is no degree of suffering from the want of food, to which the people of this country would not have been exposed.

Now for what is it, that all these risks are run? Has the law been productive of the effects, the promoters of it anticipated? or has it failed? In my judgment its failure is signal. I doubt its conferring real benefit upon any class, even for the moment; and I am satisfied it will end, if unaltered, in injuring all, deeply and permanently. The object at the time of its passing, was to keep up the prices of grain to the extraordinary height, which a concurrence of singular events had raised them to; at that period 80s. was fixed for the admission of foreign wheat, because that, for some time, had been an average price in a depreciated currency. It was expected this average could be maintained by by this provision, but what has been the result? The average price, instead of remaining at 80s., has fallen to 61s; and it has fallen from a circumstance which the men of practical wisdom of that day, left entirely out of their calculation. They forgot that a monopoly, to be effectual and safe, must contain within itself a principle of limitation of quantity; they guarded against the intrusion of foreign corn, considering it doubtless, as our forefathers voted the import of Irish cattle, a nuisance; but they did not take any precautions against a foe nearer home, namely, genial seasons, and propitious harvests; these occurred at intervals, fortunately for the country, and utterly annihilated all the speculations founded upon a high range of prices as the effects of the monopoly. Then was seen the singular phenomenon of great agricultural distress combined with large crops, and the wonderful doctrine of over production was sounded loudly in our

ears. The fact is, all was delusion. We were attempting what it was in the power of no law to effect, namely, to create and render constant, a rate of price for a commodity nearly double its value in all surrounding countries, without, at the same time, insuring a limited supply to the market. The very fact of the comparative low price of grain in foreign countries, and the quantities in granary, either here, or at the exporting ports, had ever a powerful effect in our markets, and kept them in a most feverish state. Few thought of holding English wheat in any quantity, when Foreign could be purchased at so much lower a rate, and when experience had proved, that whatever the law might be, periods were perpetually occurring, when foreign wheat was required for our consumption. Every thing became deranged and unhinged : the land was over-cropped ; inferior soils, at a great cost and much risk, made to produce scanty crops of grain, until a period of abundance arrived, when the unprofitableness of this excessive cultivation was painfully felt. Meanwhile, the charges upon the farmers were calculated according to the imagined, not the real prices of grain ; the corn factor ceased to perform his usual and most beneficial part in buying up English corn, when low in price, to store it up for periods of greater demand ; and the result was, that until our prices fell down to, or even below, the Continental level, we did not begin to recover from the stunning effects of good crops. The object, then, of the promoters of the law of 1815 has failed, and must fail from its own intrinsic defects—defects, however, which have saved the country. I scruple not to say, that had it succeeded ; had it really kept up the price of wheat, in this country, to 80s. per qr. or near it, while the prices abroad were between 30s. and 40s., it would inevitably have long since struck the most fatal blow at the prosperity of Great Britain. Instead of this, it has probably been effectual



in raising it, permanently, only 10s. or 12s. a qr. beyond what, with free trade, would have been its price; and it is for this comparatively insignificant object, that we consent to derange the whole circle of commerce, and place our great manufacturing interests, our currency, and the supply of food to the consumers, in fearful jeopardy.—Who are the parties that gain by this? One only—the landlords; the attempt to mix up the farmers, as parties interested in it, is a manifest imposition. I think a complete analysis of the subject would shew the direct reverse, that it is the interest of the farmer, like that of every other capitalist, to have food cheap rather than dear:—but I will not enter upon this somewhat abstruse enquiry; sufficient is it for my argument, that as the charges on the farmer in the shape of rent, tithes, labour, &c., are in proportion to the real or supposed average price of food, he is in the long run no gainer by its being artificially raised; and that if fluctuations in price are thereby augmented, he is, clearly, more exposed to hazard than any other class; because it is upon him that the loss, arising from a sudden depression in the first instance, falls. Well, then, what is the gain of the Landlord?—In order to judge fairly, you must look at it in its immediate and remote effects. I am satisfied, in the latter sense, there is to him, no gain, but a loss; that, as I have before intimated, his rents will rise with the increase of wealth and population, and that there is no other safe or legitimate source from whence rise in rent can be looked for. If I am asked to explain why rents should rise without an increase in the price of agricultural produce, I answer, because, there being more wealth in the country, there is a larger portion of capital ready to be expended upon the land; because men, not relying upon protection, as it is called! but thrown upon their own resources, exercise their skill and ingenuity to improve the raw material and machinery they

employ, and render their work more abundant and more perfect without an increase, or, perchance, even with a diminution of expense.

Land, in a popular sense, may be called the farmer's raw material; and the implements of husbandry, manures, seed, &c., his machinery. An amelioration in the condition of the first, and an improvement in the construction or application of the second, may enable him to raise more produce, or produce of greater value, than he now does, without a corresponding increase of expense. We have made great advances in agriculture during the last fifty years; but every enlightened agriculturist looks forward to still greater improvements. Two changes, which a free trade in corn would produce, will, when accomplished, lead to an improved value of land. One is, cropping less;—the land generally is over-tilled, and has lost, thereby, much of its productive powers, but which would be restored by longer intervals of rest. Another is, laying a larger portion down in permanent pasture. This, I admit, is an expensive process, and not very easily accomplished; but with a free trade in corn, and a full development of the immense capabilities in this country for an increase of trade, and a consequent augmentation of a well fed population, the demand for all species of grass produce, in which the home grower has nearly a natural monopoly, would be very great, and fully justify such an outlay of capital, as this species of improvement requires. There is this difference between improvements in manufactures and in agriculture: in the former, decided improvements show themselves at once, and are carried on, on a large scale; in the latter, the experiment requires a long time to test its value, and is applied at first on a small scale; the result is, that while all admit the probability of great improvements in the former, few, comparatively, speak with confi-



dence, of ameliorations in the latter; and it is only by looking back for some years, that the observer becomes conscious of the advance that has really been made. I ought here to mention, that in one article, Wool, we have tried something like free trade, and what has been the result? Are the sheep farmers ruined? Have we ceased to attend to our flocks? Are the sandy soils of this country untenanted, and not in request? Let any one possessed of either sheep, or soils suited to them, answer this question. I fearlessly assert the reverse. I say, the experiment has completely succeeded, and has more than realised our most sanguine expectations.\* But the same thing will not happen in corn, say the corn law doctors; perhaps not to the same extent, certainly not in so short a space of time; but the experiment is of great value, so far as it goes, and ought to make the practical man pause, before he extols monopolies and protection, as the acme of political wisdom. The price of wool in this country has not fallen; it has positively risen since the duty was reduced from one of considerable amount, to one almost nominal. I do not exactly expect the same result in the price of grain, but neither am I, as a farmer and landed proprietor, frightened out of my wits at the prospect of the introduction of foreign corn. I do not think it can, upon an average, be sold in this country so cheap, as to throw whole districts out of cultivation, or render any portion of land, now cultivated, of no value, as we frequently hear stated. It is difficult to say what the immediate effect of free trade in corn would be upon its price, I admit, no former experience on this point, will give us such data, as would enable the most intelligent to pre-

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\* The quantity of Sheep's Wool imported in the five years before the alteration of duty averaged 23,781,541 for each year; the average import for the last five years, is 48,571,882. I am unable to state exactly the average prices of the two periods; but all will admit the present price to be one of which no complaint can fairly be made.

dict the actual result. We have not tried it in *these days*; we cannot tell what amount of capital may be applied in the corn exporting countries to its production; neither do we know, how communications have been, and still more, may be improved, in so bulky a commodity as grain; this is, even, a more important consideration than the former.\* These are days of rail-roads and steam, and they are effecting larger revolutions in the supply and prices of commodities, than Bentham will effect in jurisprudence, or the Reformer in politics. He would be a bold man, therefore, who would venture to predict what the real effect might prove; but this he may assert, that whatever the effect on prices in the European markets, this country must conform to it; that to attempt to raise prices to a much higher level than elsewhere, is unjustifiable, and, if practicable, would be as absurd, as it was in the rustic who killed the goose for the golden egg. I have said, and I believe we have not, with all our protection, really, on an average, raised prices beyond 10s. or 12s. per qr. Now the price of grain must always be higher in the importing than the exporting country, by the expence and risk of bringing so bulky a commodity to the distant market; and the region from whence you can draw your supplies of corn, is, practically, more limited, than alarmists on the one hand, or over zealous advocates on the other, are aware of. You are limited to a certain margin of the sea, or river, or other mode of conveyance, along which your supplies are to be brought. Mr. JACOB, reckoned two hundred miles on each side of the Vistula, if my recollection is accurate, as the extreme verge from whence, even at high prices, we could draw our supplies of corn by that river. Whatever the limit may be, however,

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\* Although, as stated above, it is difficult to predict the actual result in point of price, we may, I think, with some degree of confidence, assume it would range somewhere between 42s. and 52s. per quarter for wheat.

there is a limit; and my conviction is, before our own growers could be largely driven out of the market, this question of limit would interpose in their favor. I will exemplify what I mean. I will suppose we might draw 500,000 qrs. of wheat from foreign parts, and sell it, all charges, including the profit to the importer, being covered, at 40s. per qr.; this would be drawn from districts easily accessible; but if we wanted 1,000,000 qrs., we must go further, and pay more for it,—possibly 42s.; if 1,500,000 qrs., it would, for the same cause, rise, but in a greater proportion—I will suppose to 48s.; and if 2,000,000 qrs. were required, it might cost upwards of 52s. I have used hypothetical terms, because, from what I have said before, I place no great reliance upon previous experience, in respect of price, in these locomotive days; but however modified, the principle is undoubted and of general application;—that is, of general application in a commodity of such extensive use, and of small value, in comparison of its bulk, and which, it requires either good soil or an expensive culture, to produce. The principle involved in this view is most important, so much so indeed, as to lie at the root of the whole question; if it be true, that there is a decided tendency in prices of grain to rise in an importing country, in proportion to the increase of consumption, it would follow, that not only would no injury be inflicted on the agriculture of the importing country, by the admission of foreign corn, but that it would be the bounden duty of the Legislature to throw the door open as wide as possible for such admission. Its attention should be directed, as much as possible, to remedy the evil of a constantly increasing rate of food, leading of necessity to a rise in the price of labour, and a consequent diminution in the rate of profit. But the proposition may be doubted; it may be alleged, that, that which you state as the case with respect to grain ought, if true, to be perceptible in other articles of raw



produce, such as cotton, wool, tobacco, hemp, &c.; whereas the experience of the last twenty years shows, that notwithstanding a greatly increased import of these commodities, the prices have not only not risen, but been, in some cases, lower than heretofore. I admit the force of the objection; I admit that after making due allowance for the removal of monopolies, the alteration of currency, and the lowering of freights, on account of the large capital employed in the shipping of this and other countries during the period of general peace, circumstances all of which would have an essential effect in lowering the price of foreign commodities, there still would appear no rise in the price of these articles. I also admit the increase in production to have been very great. I am anxious to state the argument fairly, and have, I believe, done so. At first sight, it would appear to militate against the opinion I have given; but on further consideration it will, I apprehend, be found in no way irreconcilable with it. The statement I have made is, that where the consumption of an article of raw produce is very great, and where its cost price is small, when compared with its bulk, there is a tendency to increased price to the distant consumer, in proportion to the augmented demand. It arises from one of two causes, either, the additional expense of drawing the supplies from greater distances, or from soils of an inferior description; and the reason why the same principle is inapplicable to other species of raw produce, is, that their price is so much greater in comparison with the expense of carriage, than that of corn, as will appear by the following statement. Wheat is mentioned by MR. JACOB to be worth 28s. per qr. at Warsaw, *communibus annis*, and the expense from Warsaw to London he estimates at 20s. per qr. more; the price, therefore, according to this authority is about  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per lb. at Warsaw, and the expense of carriage  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb., making  $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. in all. The expense of transit, thus, is 2-5ths of the whole,

or 40 per cent, whereas the prime cost of the lowest of those other commodities enumerated, namely tobacco, is from 3d. to 6d. per lb.; taking the lowest, and adding thereto the expense of carriage at the same rate as for wheat, would raise its price, without duty, to  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d., the carriage being 1-7th of the whole, in lieu of 2-5ths, or about 14 per cent, instead of 40. It is clear, therefore, that the cases are not parallel; and it remains to be seen, how far this modifies the question. In the first place it would be erroneous to assume, that the charge of conveying tobacco, cotton, wool, or hemp, would be as great as that of grain, inasmuch as the power of compressing the bulk of these commodities, without injury, exists and is constantly used; in the next place, a price of 3d. per lb. would justify, and lead to a much greater concentration of growth of a commodity, than one of  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. Whole districts would be devoted to it; labour, even that of slaves, the most costly of all, might be applied to it; expensive manures might be purchased, and inferior soils thereby stimulated to its production; while a large quantity being produced in a comparatively limited district, would cause capital to be expended in improved modes of transit, such as canals, rail-roads, &c. just as the coals exported from the Tyne and Weir, are conveyed by rail-roads to the shipping port. The expense of carriage would have no tendency to rise, and could not do so, so as to affect price materially. Supposing wheat to be 3d. per lb. instead of  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. the same result might be expected;—that would be 14s per bushel or 112s. per qr. There can be no doubt if such a price could be reckoned upon, whole districts would be devoted to the growth of wheat; but as the case stands, it is but a patch here and there so applied: land will not bear wheat for several, or indeed for two years in succession, without very high manuring and great labour; it can only be grown on the best soils, except where a very improved system of



culture prevails. The turnip and barley soils of this country did not formerly produce wheat, nor would they now, except at rare intervals, were it not that the introduction of turnips and artificial grasses, so ameliorates the description of soil, as to render it capable of producing wheat. But this is an improvement in agriculture, which a large demand for animal food would alone produce, and it is in the rich and densely-peopled country, only, that this prevails. A rich and densely-peopled country, however, rarely exports grain, and never in very large quantities. This view of the subject is important, not only as tending to mitigate alarm among the agriculturalists, but, also, as showing the impolicy, and in truth, inefficiency of any permanent duty on the import of foreign corn. Such a duty would be imposed for the protection of agriculture, not for fiscal purposes; now if it can be shown, that it would not give protection to agriculture, to any thing like its amount, I conceive its impolicy must be apparent, inasmuch as, without accomplishing the object it professes, it would tend to perpetuate the extraordinary and unnatural difference in the price of food between England and foreign countries, which the corn law establishes. The price would not be raised to the full amount of the duty, because the import being less than under a free trade, the price would be less, say 45s. exclusive of duty, instead of 50s.; the duty would raise it to 55s., that is, it would be effective to the extent of 5s., not of 10s.; but it would act as restrictive to imports to the amount of the 10s.; excluding, possibly, from 500,000 to 1,000,000 qrs. of corn, the whole of which would be consumed in addition to our own growth, by a population increasing and thriving under the operation of a free trade. It cannot be too often repeated, that it is not so much a question of actual cheapness that is involved in the policy of a free trade in corn, as the relation it establishes between its price here, and its price abroad, and the trade it would create.

I do not then believe the adoption of free trade in corn, would so essentially affect our agriculture, as some imagine;\* the change, I apprehend, would be, mainly by the land being allowed more rest; and this would, ultimately, be of service to it. Some might cease altogether to be applied to growing corn; but this is land now, as it were, on the extreme limits of culture; and the profit derived from corn crops produced upon it, is, at best, very problematical. I do not disguise from myself, however, that this change would be attended with some immediate fall in rents; and that, is certainly rather an unpleasant proceeding to those, whose income is derived from land. But can, it with safety, be avoided? Are these times in which to hold up the Landlords to the eyes of the country, as a class apart from the rest, pursuing their own selfish views, without regarding the consequences to the great mass of the people, and in a matter condemned by every impartial observer, of sufficient intelligence to appreciate the full bearing of the subject? After all, if the difference in price would not be more than I have estimated it at, would the fall be really so great, or the compensations so few, as are represented? I apprehend neither to be true. We have already re-traced our steps to a considerable extent, from the high rents of a former period, and partly by reduction, and partly by improvement, rendering the same land more valuable than heretofore, met the question of an alteration of rent consequent upon a different level of price.—No valuer, for years past, would have estimated rents at Wheat at 80s.,

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\* It is a very remarkable fact, that no very perceptible alteration in the growth of Corn has occurred in this country since 1815, notwithstanding the price of wheat has been about 60s., instead of 80s. In truth, in the United Kingdom there must have been a considerable increase, inasmuch as the population in 1815 was estimated at 19,606,015, and in 1838 at 26,858,925. The import of foreign corn has not, taking an average of years, been greater than before 1815; indeed during the five years from 1833 to 1837, the duties were entirely prohibitory. It therefore follows, that with our own growth for that time, we have fed a population increased by 7,000,000 above that of 1815. Ireland no doubt has largely contributed to this result.

but at something between 50s. and 60s. per qr. The fall, therefore, now, would be comparatively small and there would speedily arise a compensation, to meet, in part, their diminished income.—First, there would be complete free trade. Nothing but these corn laws prevents its complete adoption in this country. No monopoly, no protection, could venture to rear its head, when this monster had been despatched. Neither would it be free trade in Great Britain only; but its principles would spread in every country, with a wider diffusion, and an accelerated speed. It is the corn law of England, which upholds the monopolising, anti-commercial spirit throughout the world; it is ever appealed to, and too often with justice, as sanctioning, and even necessitating, the adoption of tariffs and regulations which fetter all trade, but especially, that of England. Just as breaking off the manacles of our slaves, will gradually lead to the extinction of slavery, so the real, cordial adoption of free trade by this country, will lead to its complete triumph every where. Now, what would be the effect of free trade to the landlords of England, after the fall in rent above alluded to, had been effected? Greater cheapness of commodities, less taxation, and an augmented demand for all the other products of land except corn; leading, as I feel convinced would be the case, in comparatively few years, to the restoration of rent, now supposed to be reduced, and laying a firm foundation for still further increase. It is not easy to picture to oneself, the rapidity wherewith this country would advance in commerce, in manufactures, and in wealth, when the full effect of this change had begun to be felt. Our progress during the last fifty years, in these respects, has been great; under this amended system it would be gigantic; and every step in this progress, when based, not on monopoly and protection, but on the solid ground of a natural and healthy trade, would redound



to the ultimate benefit of the landowners. I have said taxation would be less ; it would inevitably be so, because there would be more shoulders to bear the burden—greater wealth, from whence to extract it. We now bear 50,000,000 of taxes with as much ease as our fore-fathers bore 5,000,000, and in twenty or thirty years it would not be over sanguine to expect, that 50,000,000 would be borne with as much ease, as 30 are now. The very certainty of our incomes would be some compensation, as compared with their present fluctuating and precarious amount. One of the causes of the distress in which the West Indians were proverbially involved, arose, not from the smallness of their incomes, but their uncertainty : in like manner, there is great danger to the landed interest in keeping up high nominal rents, but which are realized only in periods of high price, and fail when prices fall : and yet, such is the uncertainty in which all are now placed who depend upon land, that the system of abatements of rent, when the markets are low, is all but universal. Men are too prone to rely on their good fortune, and too eager, in the present day, to vie with each other in luxury and fashion, to make this a desirable state of things ; more money may thereby come into the pockets of the landlord, but I question whether the Estate will not be ultimately more burthened with debt, than if his income had been somewhat less, but more certain.

All the arguments I have used, and every one I have examined, tend to an entire freedom of trade, rather than one, subject to a duty. I have not a doubt of this being the true policy ; but I also think, supposing this object assured at no very distant period, it would be wise to break the fall, and get gradually out of the present vicious system. Even with reference to the supply of food for a few years, the change should be gradual ; it is clear, the quantity of grain we should want from foreign countries is not now produced

there ; and if we created a panic, as we may expect at first, amongst the agriculturalists at home, and a sudden decrease occurred in their culture, before a corresponding increase took place abroad ; and if this were to happen simultaneously with ungenial seasons ; we might, during the transition, be exposed to considerable hazard. Mr. RICARDO felt this, and recommended beginning with even a high duty, and lowering it in certain proportions every year. I should prefer taking three periods of four years each, the common duration of a course of tillage, for a like operation ;—that is, beginning with a duty of 12s., and lowering it 4s. at the expiration of each period of four years, till the whole had ceased. This, combined with some alteration in taxation, would, I think, be a perfectly safe operation, and meet every reasonable ground of objection. In respect to taxation, every impost which could be shown to bear with peculiar weight upon land, should be removed or altered ; I do not think them numerous or heavy, but such as they are, it is most desirable to meet the claim in a spirit of fairness. The Land Tax should be repealed ; returning to those who have redeemed their portion of it, the money actually paid. Some portion of the Poor and County Rates, might be borne by the country at large, rather than by the present rate payers. Of such nature should be, all the expences connected with the Criminal Law, including the maintenance of prisoners ; and to this might be added, the Establishment Charges, as they are called, under the New Poor Law. These charges, with an increasing revenue, as might confidently be predicted, under a free trade system, or even with that approach to it I have contemplated for the present, would easily be provided for by the Chancellor of the Exchequer ; and by evincing a spirit of conciliation and fairness to the Landed Interest, more than by the actual relief, mitigate their hostility. But



after all, the *sine qua non* is Free Trade in corn; this you should steadily contemplate and resolve on obtaining. If you do achieve it, future generations in this country and throughout Europe, will have reason to be grateful for your exertions; and upon no class will you have conferred a greater, a more permanent boon, than upon the Landed Interest of Great Britain.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient servant,

W. W. WHITMORE.

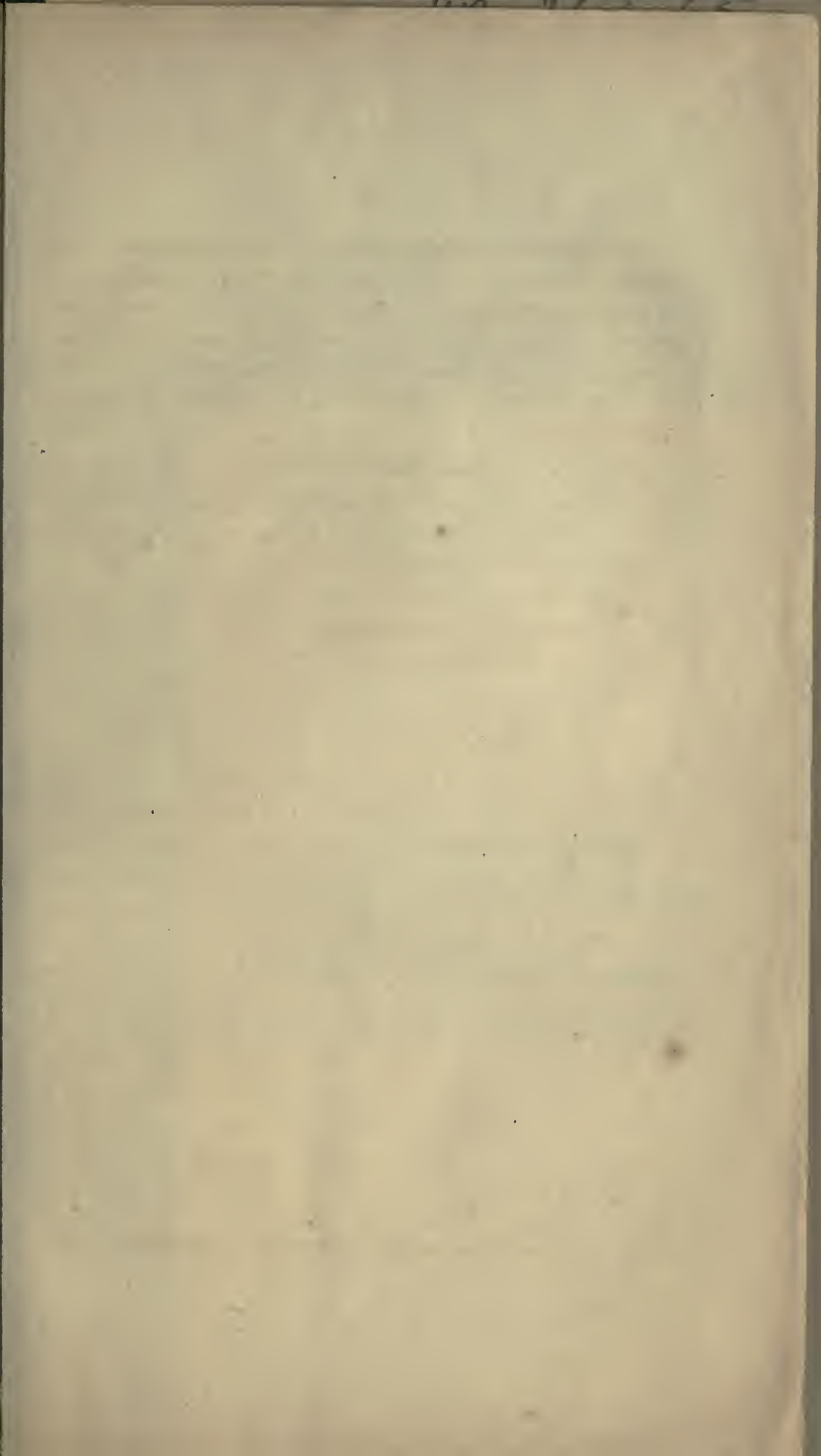
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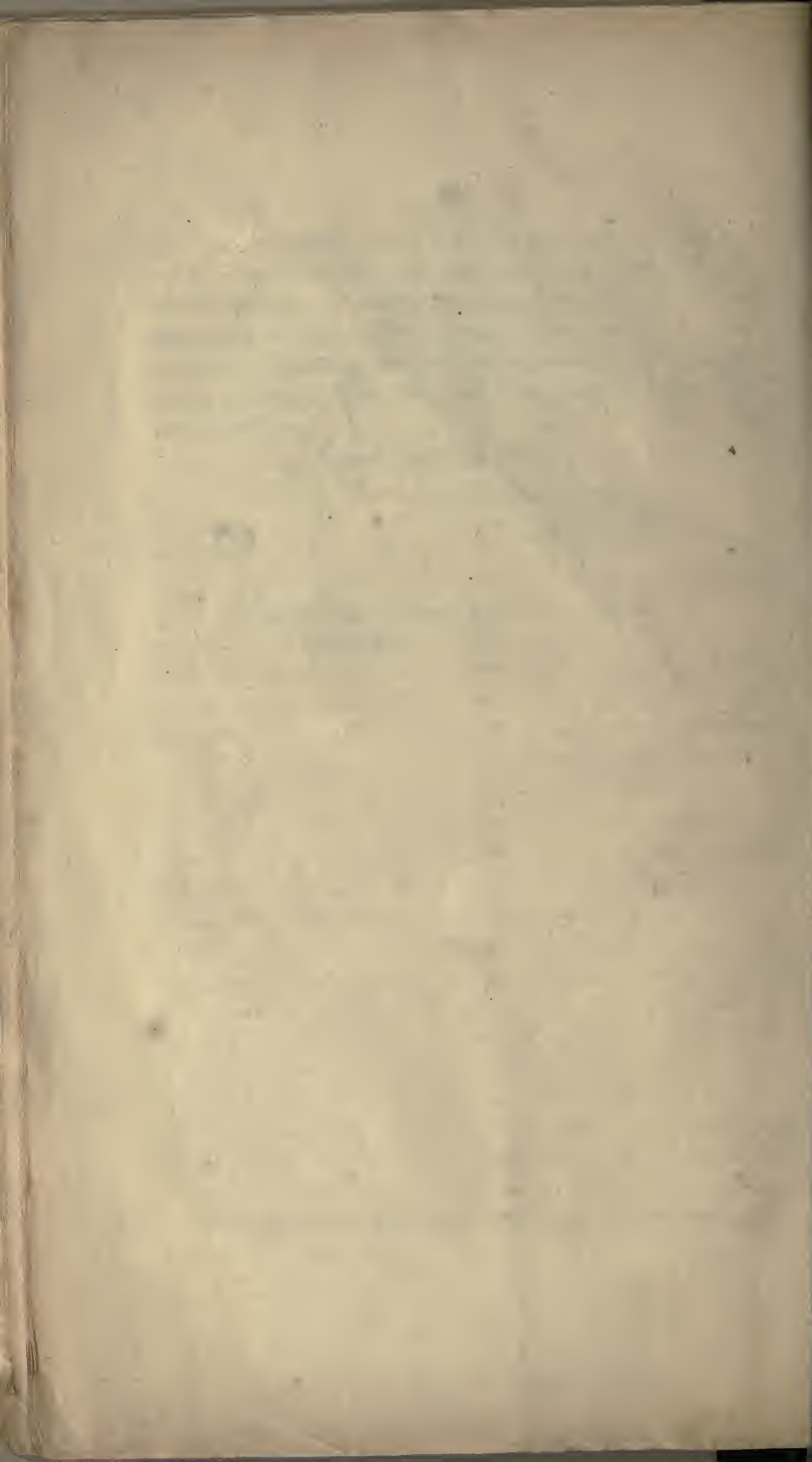
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